

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE
MONITOR

State of the Nations

The Commission's Task

By William H. Stringer

Chief of the Washington Bureau of The Christian Science Monitor

A most urgent task confronts the select investigating commission appointed by President Johnson to inquire into the assassination of President Kennedy.

This task is to examine every shred of evidence, indeed every last rumor, concerning the tragic event, and to report fully on the circumstances and the motivations—as completely as is humanly possible. Years after the assassination of President Lincoln there were disputes as to the extent of the plot and the complicity of various individuals. The case of President Kennedy is complicated by a special roadblock—the murder of his apparent assailant.

Talk with foreign embassy officials in Washington and one perceives the wisdom of President Johnson in selecting a very high-caliber commission. In other lands there is still suspicion that the President's assassination was some kind of right-wing or left-wing plot, that a "cover-up" is being practiced, that the second murder was done to extinguish evidence, and other such allegations.

The most effective way to destroy these suspicions, in President Johnson's view, was to appoint an investigative group having impeccable credentials. This he

did. As one foreign broadcaster remarked to this correspondent: "Any commission that includes Chief Justice Warren, Senator Russell of Georgia and former CIA Chief Allen Dulles, has my complete confidence."

We must now await the sifting and probing of this commission, which is appointing a staff of lawyers headed by J. Lee Rankin, United States Solicitor-General under former President Eisenhower. The commission has before it the five-volume report of the Federal Bureau of Investigation—three volumes of photos, documents, and exhibits, a volume on the Kennedy murder and a volume on the murder of his apparent assailant, Lee Harvey Oswald.

It needs to be understood that this FBI report is not a "final report." There has not been time to run down all the leads and sift all the rumors; this is an interim document, and the FBI is still vigorously on the job. Those who have seen the report believe it conclusively shows Oswald to be the murderer of the President. There is a vast weight of circumstantial evidence: the clothing shreds on the murder rifle, the ballistic tests, the palm prints in the sixth-floor storeroom, and the whole psychotic behavior of Oswald.

The FBI's life history of Oswald shows him to have been a sullen, erratic, embittered individual, resentful of authority and prejudiced against society. He could easily have been self-motivated in his deed, without conspiracy and without accomplices.

Yet all gaps in the picture must be pursued. The FBI has already established as an admitted fabrication the report that Oswald brought back \$5,000 from Mexico seven weeks before the assassination. All sorts of rumors must be run down, such as: Was there any conceivable link between Oswald and his killer, nightclub owner Jack Ruby? Did Oswald practice at a suburban rifle range—and with another man, as Dallas reports said? How did Oswald make such rapid time from his sixth-floor perch to his boardinghouse after the crime?

It may indeed turn out that all of the essential facts of the sad, tragic business are known. But for the honor of the nation and the reassurance of people here and abroad, the sifting will be thorough. As one Johnson official says: "We don't have the murderer to produce in court, so we must offer instead a commission report that commands the world's highest respect."